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Dec. 4 Workshop Seeks Information and Realistic Solutions to Bycatch Problem

By Kathleen Schmitt
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DURHAM, N.H. -- Bycatch is one of the urgent issues of fisheries management. The unintentional capture of untargeted species occurs in multispecies fisheries such as the New England groundfish fishery, and it is a compelling concern of managers striving to rebuild declining fish stocks.

Bycatch -- what it is, what's being done about it, and what still might be done to mitigate its impacts -- is the focus of a daylong workshop Wednesday, Dec. 4, at the Urban Forestry Center, 45 Elwyn Road, Portsmouth, N.H. The workshop runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with registration beginning at 8:30 a.m.

"Fisheries stakeholders -- including managers, commercial and recreational fishermen, conservationists, and researchers -- will present current problems, the latest research and possible solutions," UNH Cooperative Extension/Sea Grant Extension Educator Rollie Barnaby says.

The workshop offers an information-centered forum intended to stimulate dialogue between individuals and agencies with a stake in the fisheries and fisheries management. Case studies, speaker presentations and panel/audience discussions will consider a working definition of bycatch, the current state of knowledge of bycatch and its impacts in New England fisheries, and efforts under way to resolve bycatch problems through gear technology and management strategies.

"Our primary objective is to provide to the most current scientific and technological information on the subject, and to review and assess the experiences of the various stakeholders," Barnaby says.

The bycatch symposium is the first in a series of three fisheries-related educational workshops scheduled in the coming year. Subsequent workshops will address property rights of fisheries management and the establishment of marine protected areas (MPAs) as a fisheries management tool.

Tapping the knowledge and experience of the commercial and recreational fishing communities, state regulatory agencies, fisheries management councils, environmental organizations, the National Marine Fisheries Service and Northeast Sea Grant Programs, the workshops will provide a science-based platform for discussion aimed at resolving critical fisheries issues. Written summaries of each workshop will offer a focus for continuing discussion in policy deliberations.

Sponsored by the National Sea Grant Program, the workshop series is being developed in partnership with Sea Grant programs in New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine and Rhode Island. Other partners include the National Marine Fisheries Service, Conservation Law Foundation, New England Fisheries Management Council, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Manomet Center for Conservation Studies, and the commercial and recreational fishing communities.

The bycatch workshop is free, and lunch will be provided for those who preregister. To register, contact Rollie Barnaby/Kay Matthews at 603-679-5616 or e-mail rollie.barnaby@unh.edu or kay.matthews@unh.edu. More information about the workshops is available at <http://www.seagrant.gso.uri.edu/director/fisheriesworkshops>.

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